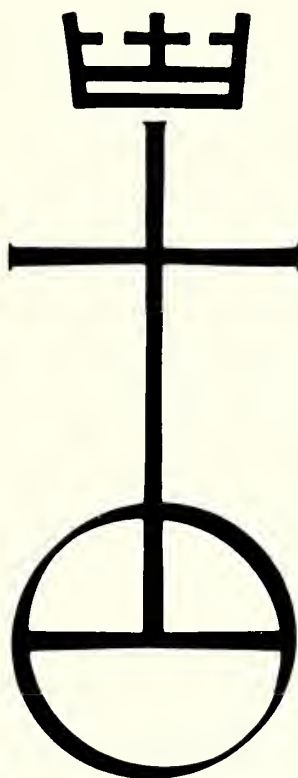




*Trinity United Church of Christ*

CONOVER, NORTH CAROLINA





The emblem of the United Church of Christ is based on the ancient Christian symbol known as the Cross of Victory or the Cross Triumphant.

Traditionally, this symbol—the cross surmounted by the crown and all of it atop the orb—signifies the kingship of the Risen Christ over all the world. The orb, representing the world is divided into three parts to signify the command of our Lord to his disciples: “You shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.”

For the United Church of Christ this emblem, rich in the traditions of the past and alive with hope for the future, is particularly appropriate.



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# *Celebrating 100 Years of Ministry*

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## A HISTORY OF TRINITY UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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St. John's Reformed Church  
The German Reformed Church of Conover  
Trinity-St. John's  
Trinity Reformed Church  
Trinity Evangelical and Reformed Church  
Trinity United Church of Christ

1892

-

1992

By Dr. Les Wicker



## *Dedication*

This history is dedicated to the countless men and women whose devotion, commitment, and hard work have, in the course of one hundred years and with the blessing of God, made Trinity the church that it is today. Many people are mentioned in this history by name; however, there are countless others who have made immeasurable contributions so that the church would be much less had they not given of themselves so generously. Appreciation is given to all who made this Centennial a time of joyful celebration.

## *Roots of The Reformed Church in Conover*

The beginnings of The Reformed Church in America occurred with the immigration of German people in the early part of the 18th Century. The Thirty Years War and the French invasion of the Rhine brought much suffering and gave cause for the German people to look to America as a place of escape and freedom of religious expression. The largest influx of German people began in 1707. It was the invitation of William Penn that caused them to settle in Pennsylvania. From 1725 to 1775 the archives of Pennsylvania recorded more than 30,000 males above the age of sixteen who departed in Philadelphia. It was from these colonists that most German Reformed people would migrate to North Carolina. One of the areas the emigrants would settle was Catawba County.

From the earliest days of these German settlements, there was a close alliance between the Reformed Churches and the Lutheran Churches. Most churches were union churches where one house of worship would serve two congregations, the Reformed and the Lutheran who would worship on alternating Sundays. The members of these churches were often intermarried so that it was often difficult to determine who belonged to which congregation. Often both groups would indoctrinate their young with the Heidelberg Catechism. The only point of contention between the two churches was on Luther's doctrine of the Lord's Supper and whether the elements were the real body and blood or symbolic. The Reformed people followed Zwingli and Calvin believing that the elements were symbolic.

About 1812 when the union congrega-

tions of St. Paul's began work on a new place of worship, the Reformed and Lutheran congregations which lived in the bend of the Catawba River and in the Lile (Lyle) Creek area, inconvenienced by distance, built a log house for worship about six miles northeast of the mother church. The new church was called St. John's and it would house both Lutherans and Reformeds. There were only occasional Reformed services held until 1828 when Rev. John G. Fritchey became the pastor of all Reformed congregations west of the Catawba River. Baptismal and confirmation records indicate the church grew substantial-

ly under his leadership.

On May 21-23, 1831, a group of ministers including Rev. Fritchey, elders, and delegates, met at Clapps (Bricks) Church in Guilford County and under the instructions of the Synod of the German Reformed Church meeting in Hagerstown, Maryland, September 26, 1830, organized the Classis of North Carolina. Interestingly, four sermons were given during the organizational meeting, two in German and two in English. There were present at that organizational meeting delegates from the St. John's Reformed congregation, indicating the growing strength of



*The family of Noah and Camilla Rowe, members of St. John's, whose descendants would have important roles in the history of Trinity Church. Noah was born February 3, 1828 and Camilla, October 15, 1834.*

the congregation.

Rev. John Fritchey was succeeded as pastor of St. John's in 1840 by Rev. John H. Crawford who served for about twelve years when Rev. Charles H. Albert, first president of Catawba College, became the minister and served during the year of 1853. He was succeeded by Rev. John Lantz who pastored the church for thirteen years while he served as Professor of Moral Philosophy and German Language at Catawba College. He was followed by Rev. Dr. Jacob Crawford Clapp who was also President of Catawba College. St. John's was a part of the Catawba Charge

consisting of Grace, Smyrna, and St. Paul's. Dr. Clapp would serve for more than thirty years and it was during his tenure that the Reformed members of the St. John's congregation began to conceive the idea of a Reformed congregation in the village of Conover.

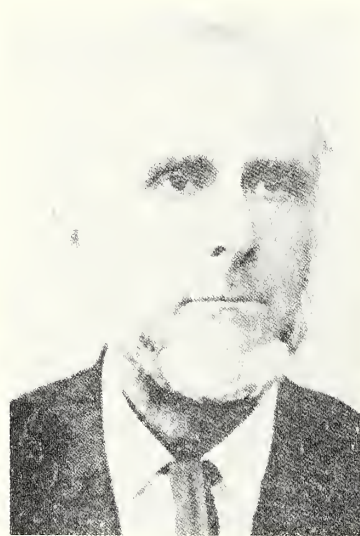
Although there was close communion between the Lutheran and Reformed congregations of St. John's, the need for a church in Conover and the preservation of Reformed identity became more and more apparent. As a case in point, Reformed identity was of such importance that the Reformed bap-

tismal certificate of Johann Theobold Hunsicker (Hunsucker) was brought with him from Germany. He was baptized January 24, 1744 in the Reformed Church at Ranweiler, Germany, and was the son of Johannes Hunsicker and wife, Marie-nee Peirson of Schallback. With his father, Theobold, he immigrated to Allentown, Pennsylvania, in 1748 and came to the Lyles Creek area of Catawba County in 1773. More than a century later and including such transverse events as The Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, and The Great Civil War, the need for Reformed Church identity and doctrine remained.

## *A Church Is Born in Conover*

As has been pointed out, before there was a Trinity Reformed Church in Conover, there was a Reformed congregation in the Conover area of Catawba County. And, in fact, Trinity is the continuation of the old St. John's Reformed Church. When the church was organized on August 20, 1892, fifteen of its seventeen charter members were transferred from St. John's. St. John's continued as a Reformed congregation, but with the passage of time, its members were either added to the rolls of Trinity or absorbed into the membership of St. John's Lutheran.

In addition to the need to preserve Reformed identity, the prevailing factor in beginning a Reformed Church in Conover was the existence of two Sunday Schools that operated independently and were each in the village of Conover. One was near the present railroad crossing and the other just north of the town in the home place of Pinkney Rowe.



*Dr. Jacob Clapp, First Minister of Trinity Church*

Since travel by foot, horse, or buggy was more difficult, and encouraged by sentiment to have a church of the Reformed tradition, it seemed appropriate to build a church in Conover.

A group led by Caleb Herman, J.P. Cline, James Propst, Edgar A. Herman, Thomas L. Hunsucker, and W.J. Hunsucker conferred with Dr. Jacob Clapp, minister of

the St. John's congregation, expressing their desire to build a church in Conover.

Under the guidance of Dr. Clapp, the group purchased land from Mr. and Mrs. Elcanah Ekard, December 5, 1891 for a sum of \$75.00. The property was deeded to: J.P. Cline, Thomas Hunsucker, and P.G. Herman, "Trustees of 'The German Reformed Church.'" Thomas Hunsucker and J.P. Cline composed the Building Committee and Nelson Hunsucker and Pierce Moser were named foremen of the brick work. Bricks were handmade and fired in the area. Assisting with the brick masonry were Hastings Hunsucker and W.J. Hunsucker. Jonas Hunsucker was in charge of the carpentry, woodwork for the pews and pulpit furniture, and wainscoting. The bell, which still hangs in the tower of the present Trinity Church building, was donated by Dr. Jacob Clapp and was one which had been used in the Old White Church in Newton as Grace

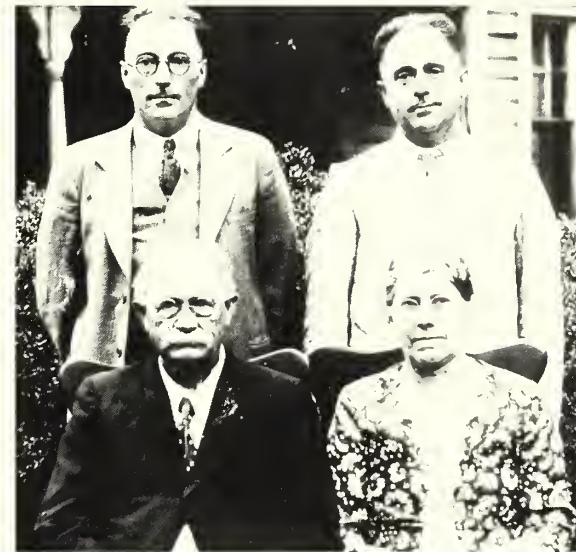




*First Church, erected 1892.*



*Caleb and Elizabeth Herman*



*Sitting: Edgar and Dora Herman. Standing: Ken Herman and Clyde Herman.*



*Elizabeth Cline*



*James and Mary Propst with children, James, Jr., Mary and Beulah.*



*Carrie Cline Herman*





*The Thomas and Amanda Hunsucker family. Front row: Auburn, Rena Bertie Simmons, Katrina. Second row: Jonas and Vertie Hunsucker, Ernest, Eula, Maude, Elsie, Cleveland and Vertie Hunsucker. Third row: John and Claudia Hunsucker Simmons, Thomas and Amanda, Aubrey and Bertie Hunsucker Rockett.*

Reformed Church was called. Thus, unlike most newly organized congregations, there was a beautiful church building erected before the congregation was actually chartered.

On August 20, 1892, Dr. Jacob Clapp organized the congregation with seventeen charter members. They were Caleb and Elizabeth Herman, J.P. and Elizabeth Cline

and their daughters, Carrie, Eva and Bettie Cline Rockett, Edgar and Dora Herman, Thomas and Amanda Hunsucker, W.J. Hunsucker, Frank Hoke, Sarah C. Hunsucker, Catherine Hunsucker Turner, James and Mary Propst.

All seventeen charter members transferred from St. John's except James and Mary Propst who transferred from St. Paul's

Reformed Church.

The consistory of the new German Reformed congregation consisted of Thomas Hunsucker and James Propst as elders and Ed Herman and J.P. Cline as deacons. Carrie Cline Herman was chosen as the first pianist and organist. A reed organ was loaned by her parents, Mr. and Mrs. J.P. Cline.

The name chosen for the new church was "Trinity." In May, 1893, the congregation was enrolled in the classis of North Carolina and became part of the Catawba Charge, consisting of Trinity, St. John's, St. Paul's, and Smyrna. A house located on 1st Avenue North in Conover was purchased from W.P. Smith to be used for the parsonage of the charge. Some thirty years later a new two-story parsonage would be built on the same site as the first.



*First parsonage: second house. The first and third houses still stand.*

Dr. Clapp continued as minister of the church until 1893 when he was followed by Rev. Harvey A.M. Holshouser. It was under



his pastorate that the indebtedness of the young congregation was cleared and the original deed transferred to the trustees of the church on March 29, 1897. This was an important time as the church was formally dedicated April 4, 1897, with an all-day service in which Dr. Clapp preached the morning sermon, Rev. Holshouser served Holy Communion, there was "Dinner on the Grounds," and Jacob C. Leonard, Field Secretary of Catawba College gave the afternoon sermon followed by the solemn ritual of dedication.



*Bertie Hunsucker Rockett: First baby baptized in new church.*

Rev. Holshouser served the church until May 1, 1897. He was succeeded by Rev. Charles Riedesel, a graduate of Heidelberg Seminary, who served the church until March 1, 1890. Ministers who followed were: Revs. Henry Sechler, Samuel Beck, John Foil, Milton Whitener, Jacob Clapp, and John Keller. These were lean years for the young church as it struggled to gain momentum. It was part of a charge and, at best, ministers were often student supplies.

It was in 1903 that Sidney S. Rowe and his wife, Zora, united or should it be said, reunited with the church. Born in 1868 and attending the Free School in Conover, he was the son of Noah Isaiah and Camilla Smith Rowe. Noah Rowe was an elder in the St. John's Reformed Church before Trinity was organized.



*Sidney S. Rowe*

*Zora Hunsucker Rowe*

He was a descendant of Peter Rowe, an elder of St. John's in the early 1800's. At the age of 22, Sid had turned ambitious eyes westward, living first in Texas, then moving

to become a homesteader in Washington and Idaho. He sold his homestead and moved back to his native Conover. His oldest daughter, Essie, was 8 years of age at the time of the move back east.

Essie would be confirmed March 29, 1907, and is thus the member with the longest continuous membership, Belle Shook being the oldest member. Essie would later marry Alvin Schell and they would become the parents of the Schell family presently related to the church. Their grandson, Lee Jessup, would become an outstanding United Church of Christ minister. Another daughter of Sid and Zora, Lillian, would be born later. Sid would serve the church in numerous capacities including elder and Sunday School superintendent. He was on the Building Committee for the building of the "Rock Church" and the present facility in 1952. The owner of a milling company, he served as Mayor of Conover.

In 1912, life for the congregation took a turn for the better as John C. Peeler, a student serving as a supply while attending Catawba College, was ordained to the ministry and would serve the church until April 30, 1918. For these six years Trinity experienced a surge of growth due partly to the leadership of Rev. Peeler and the combining of membership of Trinity and the Reformed congregation of St. John's. Although the church property would remain with St. John's until it would finally be settled in 1946, when St. John's would make a contribution to Trinity's building fund for their remaining property rights, practically all the Reformed members of St. John's moved to Trinity including: the children of Philo Herman—Bertha, Elizabeth, George, and Harry; Lester, Garland, Joseph, Lycurgus, and Colon Hunsucker, A.J. Wallace, John

Henry Wallace, Roy Wallace, Blanche Wallace Schronce, Claude Wallace, and others. John Wallace's children were Blanche Wallace Hefner Mull and Louise Wallace Epley. Thus began the family tree of a large family association with Trinity Church today.

Lester E. Hunsucker, the son of Nelson Hunsucker who laid the brick for the first church, was the father of Vera Hunsucker Wagoner, Henrietta Hunsucker Sherrill, Marie Hunsucker Hoke, and Joe Hunsucker. Lester would later haul rock from a quarry in Hiddenite to build the rock church.



*Lester Hunsucker*

The influx of St. John's members nearly doubled the membership of Trinity.

Trinity gained two other members during this period of growth in the additions of Adrian L. and Annie Shuford, Sr., who were



*Adrian, Sr. and Annie Shuford*

received November 2, 1913. These two members would greatly shape and influence much of the future of Trinity in their capacities for leadership and talent. Mr. Shuford would begin serving as Sunday School superintendent in 1914 and would serve in the capacity for more than 40 years. Mrs. Shuford, who had been reared in Daniels Reformed Church in Lincoln County, graduated from Catawba College, and who was also a gifted pianist and organist, would serve as pianist for the Sunday School, organist for the church, and have great influence in the music program of the church. In addition to their leadership in Trinity Church, Adrian and Annie would become benefactors of Catawba College and it would be their vision that would be instrumental in the purchase of property in Blowing Rock for what is now known as Blowing Rock Assembly Grounds, a year-round conference center that serves thousands of United Church of Christ people and others annually. Having located the property known as the Hughes Estate, they consulted Annie's brother, Jessie Warlick and Alex

Shuford, both members of Corinth Reformed Church and with the approval of the Southern Synod meeting at Trinity Church in April, 1945, the property was procured for a sum of \$16,500.00.

Mr. and Mrs. William Farel Warlick would also be received into membership during this era having come from Grace Reformed Church in Newton in 1916. Mr. Warlick was a professor of Latin at Catawba College and would serve as principal of Conover School. Also musical, he would be instrumental in much of the music program in the formative years of the church. Before a scout troop was organized, Mr. Warlick had a boys group which paralleled the scouting program. It would be through his investigation and interest that property was found for John's River Valley Camp in 1936. The property was originally a Boy Scout Camp



*Adrian, Jr., Betty, Mary, and Annie Shuford*

operated by the Kiwanis Club of Lenoir. Mr. Warlick or "Uncle Farel" as he would be known by the campers, served as resident manager of the camp from 1936-1940. It was the summer of 1940 that Mr. Warlick would witness one of the worst floods the moun-



tains had witnessed. Referred to as "The August Flood" the river rose and, in addition to washing out the bridge, caused a massive mud-slide that brought tons of dirt down Vesper Hill. The land-slide luckily occurred while the 4-H campers were eating supper so that no one was in a cottage in the path of the slide. Working alone at JRVC, Mr. Warlick said, "I spend many weekends alone, only with lanterns and birds, but someone had to be a pioneer if this project was to succeed."

Thus, as a consequence of the memberships of Mr. and Mrs. Adrian Shuford, Sr. and Mr. and Mrs. William F. Warlick, Trinity would for years come to have strong ties with Catawba College and was a part of the beginnings of Blowing Rock Assembly Grounds and John's River Valley Camp.

Also uniting with Trinity Church in this era were Edgar and Emma Setzer who joined in 1913. Edgar and Emma would become parents of Mary Setzer Simmons, Emmett Setzer, Chloe Setzer, Pearl Setzer, Raymond Setzer, and Lawrence Setzer. A large number of the living descendants of Edgar and Emma are now active members of Trinity.



*Edgar and Emma Setzer*



*Lillian Rowe Cline and Adrian Shuford, Jr. in Tom Thumb Wedding.*

Confirmation was an important part of a young person's church life. Children had to learn a great deal from memory from the Heidelberg Catechism or Child's Catechism. Recorded dates of confirmations were: Cleveland Hunsucker, April 5, 1903; Jonas Hunsucker and Clyde Hayden Herman, August 7, 1904; Maude Eckard, James A. Propst, Jr., Odell Hahn, and Pearl Setzer, April 2, 1916. James Propst would serve the church as deacon and elder and next to Essie

Schell is the member with the second longest continuous membership. Odell Hahn would marry Rose Sigmon who, along with her sister, Claudia Sigmon Gantt, would become long standing and much beloved members of the church.

Rev. Banks Peeler, a student at Catawba College, supplied the church during the year of 1918. Rev. Peeler was later to become one of the outstanding ministers of the Classis. Because of negative feelings towards Germans as a result of the World War, Trinity ceased to make reference to itself as Trinity German Reformed Church by dropping the word "German" out of its name. Rev. Peeler was followed by Rev. Oliver H. Senssning who had served in World War I as an Army chaplain. Known for his cooking, he frequently served members of the congregation utilizing his culinary art. During his tenure, stained glass windows were installed from funds collected by the Ladies Aid Society. However, a period of five years were to ensue in which there would be no regular minister other than student supplies. Ruth Sigmon Hahn became a member October 19, 1919. Raymond Hunsucker was confirmed April 4, 1920, and William Moore, August 1, 1924.

Rev. O. Bain Michael, a student at Central Seminary in Dayton, Ohio, supplied the church during the summer of 1922. Although at the church for only a short time, he was remembered for a dynamic message on the occasion of the church's 30th Anniversary. He also met and later married Alberta Hunsucker, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. W.J. Hunsucker.

Rev. Dobbs F. Ehlmann, also a student at Central Seminary, supplied the church during the summer of 1925. After completing seminary, he served as a missionary, later to

return and serve churches in Pennsylvania.

During the post John Peeler years there was a lull in the growth and development of the church. A series of student supplies and times when the church would be without a minister at all and relied completely on the lay leadership, impeded the growth and development of the church. Fortunately, the church was stabilized by the strong lay leadership it had obtained in its earlier days. The Church School often served as the supporting arm for the rest of the congregational life. During these years, however, the Bible was taught on a regular basis and Church School leaders kept the spirit alive and held the congregation together.



*Rev. William Shaffer*

It was May 28, 1926, that Rev. William Shaffer, a young minister who had just graduated from Central Seminary, became the minister of the weakened congregation. To his credit, new life and enthusiasm were

injected into the texture of the church.

A new beautiful two-story parsonage at a cost of \$5,000.00 was erected at the site of the old parsonage on First Avenue North in 1926. The completion of the new parsonage signaled a feeling of renewal and optimism for the church. The parsonage still stands on First Avenue North. During Rev. Shaffer's pastorate a large number of Reformed members were transferred from St. John's. Marshall and Vervie Fox Huffman were received by confirmation and letter April 17, 1927. Vervie's other family members, Fred, Guy, Clyde, and Annie Fox, would become members over the next several years. Gus Poovey was confirmed October 16, 1927. Gus was the son of Noah A. Poovey who attended regularly but never joined. Later, Noah's other children, Hubert, Rose, Bertha, and Ray, would become members along with their extended families. Mrs. Zora Rowe, one of the church's most faithful and loyal members died December 10, 1928.

Rev. Christopher Columbus Wagoner, became the minister on March 1, 1930. He had graduated from Central Seminary in 1910 and came to Trinity with twenty years experience having served pastorates in High Point, Thomasville, First Church in Salisbury, and Grace Church in Newton. With momentum already gained under the leadership of Rev. Shaffer, coupled with the skillful direction of Rev. Wagoner, the ensuing years would be most eventful. In addition, his lengthy pastorate would stabilize the church and set a precedent of lengthy pastorates for all ministers who would follow. On July 12, 1931, the consistory notified St. John's Lutheran congregation that the need to rent their church building one fourth of the time for Reformed church services was cancelled, signaling that the St. John's Reformed con-

gregation was now a part of Trinity in entirety.

The 40th Anniversary was observed August 21, 1932. Unlike the bleakness of the early and mid-twenties, now a mood of optimism embraced the entire congregation. It



*Rev. C.C. Wagoner*

was a time characterized by activity, life, and visions of a very bright future. As noted by W. Farel Warlick, many new members were added from descendants of earlier families and others who moved to Conover and were seeking "a friendly welcoming spirit."

On December 31, 1933, the church, having outgrown the forty-one year old little



brick church, took action to begin the process of building a new sanctuary. The Building Committee consisted of L.E. Hunsucker, A.L. Shuford, Sr., Sid S. Rowe, Marshall Travis, and P.W. Herman. R. Clemmer, an architect from Hickory, was secured to prepare plans. The total cost would be \$11,000.00 of which \$1,500.00 would be contributed by the Classis of North Carolina. The sanctuary would be constructed from quarried stone and thus become known as the rock church, later, "The Old Rock Church." The memorial

stained glass windows which were put in the brick church in 1919 were fitted beautifully into the new structure. The sanctuary was dedicated July 7, 1935, with Rev. John H. Keller, a former minister, giving the dedication sermon.

Earl Sipe joined the church March 28, 1932. Hugo and Willa Liem were received by letter of transfer January 1, 1933, Lacy Havnaer joined in August, 1934. His brother, Yates, would join in March, 1938.

On June 26, 1934, at Cleveland, Ohio,

delegates from The Reformed Church of the United States and delegates from the Evangelical Synod of North America met and authorized a union of the two church bodies. Both church bodies had roots in Germany and Switzerland dating back to the Reformation. The Reformed lineage could be traced to the Palatinate of Western Germany and Huldreich Zwingli. The Evangelical group traced their roots also to Zwingli, but included Lutheran sections of northern, central, and eastern Germany. Recognizing their common heritage, creeds, polity, and sacraments, the two church bodies merged to become The Evangelical and Reformed Church. Consequently, Trinity's name was changed to Trinity Evangelical and Reformed Church.

Carl Herman, a son of the congregation, began to study for the ministry about this time. He would fulfill his calling by serving in the Episcopal Church.

Rev. Wilson Cheek, a graduate of Catawba College and Lancaster Seminary, became the minister on May 28, 1939. Rev. Cheek would pastor the church during the difficult years of World War II when fifty-one young men from the church would respond to the call of duty to serve their country. It is difficult to conceive the aura of uneasiness and distress having so many young men overseas placed upon the congregation.

Two of those who went to serve their country would never return as Percy Deveney, son of Shannon and Ruth and a pilot was shot down January 28, 1944 in the South Pacific, and Marshall Rockett, Jr., son of Marshall, Sr. and Bertie Rockett was shot down over Belgium September 7, 1944.

Upon Rev. Cheek's arrival, the parsonage was completely renovated. A new altar and pulpit chairs were dedicated to the memory



*The Second Building: "The Rock Church"*





*Rev. and Mrs. Wilson Cheek and members of their family.*

of Dr. F.L. Herman on January 28, 1940. The Men's Brotherhood was organized May 26, 1940, with J.W. Wagoner, son of Rev. C.C. Wagoner, as its first president. In spite of the war that had already begun in Europe, the congregation continued to move forward and there was a need for additional educational space as several Church School classes were held in the sanctuary through the use of cur-

tain dividers. In September, 1941, a survey of the church was made to ascertain if a more modern educational facility could be added. Architect R.L. Clemmer of Hickory was employed to develop preliminary plans and submit drawings of the exterior. At a congregational meeting on February 15, 1942, plans previously submitted in a booklet form to the congregation were adopted. A capital campaign raised \$5,500.00 in donations. In a booklet, Adrian Shuford, Jr., who was serving as youth leader, said, "Those of us who work with the youth of our church see the need for this proposed new building...We have a responsibility to our church and to

God to give our best to the future." However, due to World War II, the actual construction of the project was postponed until the return to normal times.

Although the nation was in the throes of a people at war, Trinity Evangelical and Reformed Church had reached the half-century mark and it was time to be reminded of and celebrate her rich and much blessed heritage. An Anniversary Committee composed of W. Farel Warlick, Chairman, Mrs. F.L. Herman, E.A. Herman, and Rev. Cheek, was formed to research the history of the church and plan an appropriate celebration for August 16 and 20, 1942. The committee



*Rev. and Mrs. Lonnie Carpenter with their family.*



did extensive research with information gathered from various historical sources. At the time of the 50th Anniversary there were 259 members of the congregation. This included eleven who still carried their membership on the rolls of St. John's. The 50th Anniversary was a most memorable occasion. The six charter members who were still living had a picture made on the steps of the church.

During this era John William Settlemyre announced that he would study for the ministry. He would graduate from Catawba College in 1946 and Lancaster Seminary in 1949 and have a very fruitful ministry serving churches in western North Carolina.

Previous to the pastorate of Rev. Cheek, Trinity had been part of a charge with the minister sharing his time with other Reformed congregations. On coming to Trinity, Rev. Cheek also served Faith Church, Brookford, but during his pastorate, the charge was dissolved and Trinity became a "full-time" church. Rev. Cheek would leave Trinity May 28, 1944, to initiate work at Macedonia Church in Hickory and continue as minister of Faith Church, Brookford. Macedonia was officially organized October 7, 1945 and met in a house on 8th Street, NE, Hickory. Due to a rezoning of property the growth of the church was thwarted and it was disbanded in 1962.

Rev. Lonnie A. Carpenter, a graduate of Catawba College and Lancaster Theological Seminary, was called to become the minister in 1944. A young minister of thirty years of age, Rev. Carpenter would bring great leadership and direction to the growing congregation. World War II would end during his first year of ministry. Those who had served their country so faithfully overseas would be returning home to be joined by others who

would find the town of Conover a wonderful place to live and raise a family. With the influx of people and the spirit of optimism, the completion of plans for an educational building three years previous were abandoned in favor of relocating the church two blocks north. The meeting to do this was March 4, 1945, and the vote was unanimous. A Building Committee was soon appointed.

More than thirteen acres of land were purchased from the heirs of Elcanah Ekard. Preliminary plans were submitted by Architect A. Hensel Fink of Philadelphia and approved on August 27, 1950. Final plans were placed for bids the following year and the contract awarded to Herman-Sipe Company. Groundbreaking was to be December 3, 1951.

Even though the Rural English Gothic architecture was detailed, work progressed

rather rapidly. Larry Carpenter of Claremont was foreman of construction. He was assisted by Tollie M. Hedrick. A memorable service was the laying of the cornerstone May 11, 1952. Documents placed in the cornerstone were:

- A Membership Roster of the Church.
- A Revised Standard Version of the New Testament.
- A History of the Heidelberg Catechism.
- A copy of "My Confirmation."
- Copies of "The Messenger."
- Copies of "The Standard" of the Southern Synod.
- A copy of the Southern Synod Minutes of 1951.
- A copy of The Hickory Daily Record and Newton News Enterprise.



*Members of the Consistory, 1946.*



As part of the activities of the day, A Mother's Day Service was held in the morning to honor mothers. Due to inclement weather, the luncheon, prepared by the men, was moved to Warlong Glove Cafeteria. More

than 300 people were fed.

The building was formally occupied on August 2, 1953. The cost was \$325,000.00 and including equipment, a total of \$413,000.00 which was liquidated in

September, 1955.

In 1946 Trinity established a kindergarten which was among the first in the area. The kindergarten was led for many years by Miss Elizabeth Herman, affectionately known by the name, "Miss Lizzie." Miss Herman, assisted by Mrs. J.C. Lingle, led the kindergarten for twelve years and with an enrollment reaching forty pupils. Mrs. J.E. Coulter succeeded Miss Lizzie. Others who would teach in the kindergarten were Mrs. Pinkie Kiser, Mrs. Dot Parsons, and Mrs. Joan Saine.

The kindergarten would continue to be a viable part of the church until it was discontinued when the state would offer public kindergartens to all pupils in the mid-1970's.

The year 1948 was a year of tragedy as the twin sons of Lathan and Pinkie Kiser, Keith and Kermit Kiser, contracted polio, which was epidemic, and within a matter of days passed away. Their deaths were August 6 and 12 of 1948. Their age was ten.

Under Rev. Carpenter's ministry of eleven years the church had a net gain of 226 in its membership. Rev. Carpenter, known to most everyone as Lonnie, was instrumental in beginning the Men's Barbecue in 1950 when a pit was dug at the site of the present parking lot of the Conover Post Office and under torrents of rain, the first Barbecue was held. The Barbecue would become an "institution" as thousands would enjoy it over the years. Rev. Carpenter was an outstanding minister of the Southern Synod and later the Southern Conference serving as president of both. He resigned September 11, 1955, to accept a call to First Evangelical and Reformed Church in Burlington, North Carolina. For his outstanding leadership, Rev. Carpenter would be awarded the Doctor of Divinity Degree from Catawba College.



*Miss Lizzie Herman and kindergarten children.*



Rev. Edwin Alcorn became the minister on April 15, 1956. Rev. Alcorn was a graduate of Franklin and Marshall College in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and a graduate of Lancaster Theological Seminary. He had previously served in Middletown, Maryland. During Rev. Alcorn's ministry the church continued to grow and expand its programs. The old parsonage was sold and the new and present parsonage built in 1958. The home was presented to the congregation when the Alcorns had an open house on December 15, 1958. With a growing scouting and youth program, the need became more apparent for a building specifically designated for youth. Thus, the Youth Activities Building was constructed in 1964 to serve as a scout hut and activities center for youth.



*Mary Rockett Crump*

In 1958, Mary Rockett Crump came to be the church secretary following Jewel Gore. Such was the beginning of a long and won-

derful relationship with Mary Crump who would serve as church secretary for 31 years. Fittingly, her grandparents were charter members of the church.

In 1957 the Evangelical and Reformed Church and the Congregational Christian Church met in Cleveland, Ohio, and merged the two church bodies to become the United Church of Christ. The Congregational Church traced its roots to the Pilgrims who came to Massachusetts in 1620 and the Puritans who followed and who together formulated the "Cambridge Platform" in 1647. The Christian Church traced its roots to Rev. James O'Kelly, a Methodist minister, who led a group out of the Methodist Church on the issue of local church autonomy in 1792 in Orange County, North Carolina. Thus, two church bodies, one of German descent and the other of English, merged to form the United Church of Christ. Trinity became a part of the United Church of Christ officially September 30, 1965, as the Southern Synod voted to merge with the Southern Convention and the Convention of the South. Rev. Alcorn would guide Trinity through these times of merger.

On November 1, 1964, by congregational vote, the position of Director of Christian Education was established. Rev. Joe Wise who had previously served as summer youth worker, assumed the position in September, 1965.

During Rev. Alcorn's ministry the church had a net gain of 82 members. He resigned December 31, 1965 to become the Western North Carolina Associate Minister with offices in Salisbury. He was awarded the Doctor of Divinity Degree by Catawba College in recognition of his outstanding ministry.



*Dr. Edwin Alcorn*

Rev. Van Grimes, a graduate of Catawba College and Lancaster Theological Seminary, was called to be the minister and began his work June 28, 1966, having come to Trinity from Shiloh Church in Faith, North Carolina. During Rev. Grimes' ministry, Trinity would celebrate its 75th Anniversary which would be held August 20, 1967. A beautiful booklet updating the history of the church was prepared. The church continued its benevolent support of ministries beyond the local congregation supporting the Church of the Master that was organized February 2, 1964. A long held dream of the people of the Southern Synod was the building of a retirement center somewhere within the synod. This dream would become a reality when J.W. Abernethy of Newton would make land available and challenge the churches of the Southern Conference to a challenge goal. The facility would be called the United Church

Retirement Home and Trinity would give major emphasis in its benevolent giving to support the facility.

Rev. Joe Wise resigned as Minister of Christian Education in 1967 to assume a pastorate in Hanover, Pennsylvania. Genny Lou Piercy became the new Director of Christian Education. Remaining in the position for two years, Genny Lou resigned, and the position was not filled until Rev. Larry Bolick became Minister of Christian Education in 1975, serving also in that same capacity at Grace Church in Newton.

Under Rev. Grimes' ministry the church had a net gain of 105 members. Rev. Grimes

resigned December 31, 1976, to become a liaison minister for Elon and Catawba Colleges and the churches of the conference. He would later serve Bethany UCC and become Administrator of Abernethy Center.

Dr. Les Wicker became the minister on April 1, 1977, having moved to Trinity from Pleasant Ridge United Church of Christ in Greensboro. Dr. Wicker is a graduate of Greensboro College, The Divinity School of



*Rev. and Mrs. Van Grimes with their children: Jane, Julia, John and Katherine.*



*Dr. and Mrs. Les Wicker with sons, Robin and Dale.*



Duke University, and completed his work for a Doctor of Philosophy in Family Studies at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Since being at Trinity he has become a Clinical Member of the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapists.

During Dr. Wicker's pastorate of fifteen years, a number of new ministries have been developed. In the fall of 1977, Youth Club, a mid-week program for children, was begun and continues to be a very viable part of the children's ministry. The Bus Ministry was begun with the purchase of a new bus in 1978. Ted Setzer was responsible for much of the success of the bus ministry in its early years. A new Allen Digital Computer Organ was dedicated in a concert by Dr. Gil Pirovano of Catawba College on April 1, 1979

in honor of Mrs. Annie Shuford Rankin and Mr. William Farel Warlick, for their many contributions to the music program.

Rev. Larry Bolick resigned as Minister of Christian Education and Mr. Peter Bost, who was serving as Choir Director, assumed the position of Director of Christian Education.

In 1981, children's summer softball league was formed with other area UCC churches. The league continues to be a source of anticipation for youth of the church. In 1983, the Outreach Committee was formed to seek to bring the church to people beyond the local church and to be a facilitator for church growth. Under the leadership of the Outreach Committee, the church began to televise its services over WHKY TV and cable TV to five surrounding counties, put morning radio spots on WNNC,



*Outreach Committee sends a message of love and hope.*

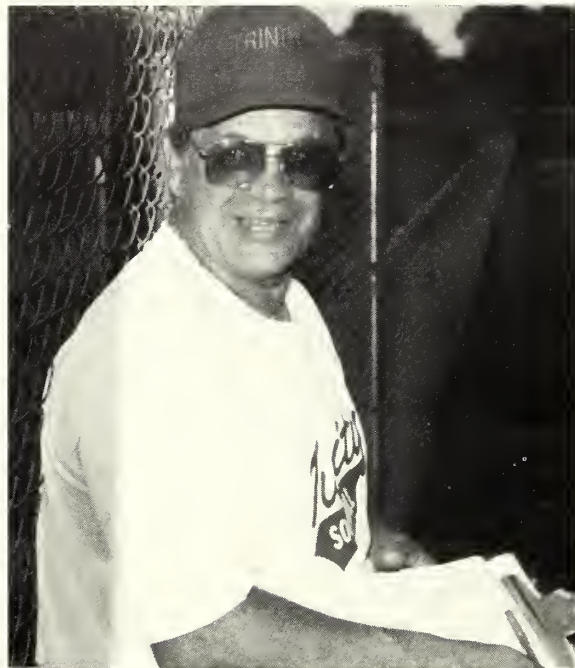


*Children's softball team with coach Don Baker.*

and raise the visibility of the church through newspaper and other forms of sharing the church's story. Ron Young and Judy Baker, both of whom were new members, were very instrumental in getting the Outreach program going. The program was so successful the United Church of Christ's Office of Communication came and made a video for national presentation on how a local church can share its story through advertising.

In 1985, a beautiful new recreational park was built across from the YMCA and was rated as a semi-professional facility. The first game was played with the Newton-Conover Church League All-Stars playing the World Champion Howard's Team. Bill Hendrix was instrumental in getting the field started and seeing that it has always been a beautifully maintained facility where literally thousands of people have enjoyed playing and spectating.





*Bill Hendrix, a leader of Trinity's Recreational program.*

Peter Bost resigned as Director of Christian Education and Ginny Bunn became the new Director. Ginny would serve the church in this capacity for three years.

In 1985, the Youth Activities Building was converted to a center for older adults and through the Adult Life Program, the center serves around 35 adults daily.

Mr. Eric Davis became the Director of Christian Education in 1987. It was May, 1989, that Trinity began the Early Service. The service has grown from an average of 45 for the first year to 58 for 1991.

It was in 1988 that a Building Committee was organized to study the needs of the church in terms of a Family Life Building and new office complex. Committee members

were: Elwyn Bowman, Charlie Bunn, Fred Fox, David Harris, Bill Hendrix, Andy Kanipe, Fred Propst, Ted Setzer, Adrian Shuford, Jr., Chairman, Paul Smith, Gloria Thomas, Harry Whisenant, and Ann Young. The final vote to build was taken April of 1991 and the new work for the Life Enrichment Center, new office complex, kitchen renovations, and parking were begun in May 1991. The new facilities were dedicated March 22, 1992. The architectural firm of CBSA under the leadership of Fred Abernethy and James Stumbo was chosen as architects. Matthews Construction Company of Conover received the bid to do the work. The multi-purpose Life Enrichment Center is planned for recreation, fellowship, and dining.

In January, 1990, Mary Crump retired as church secretary and Dianna Mantak became the new Administrative Assistant for the operations of the church office.



*Dianna Mantak, Administrative Assistant.*

In February of 1991 the Bus Ministry Committee sold the old bus and with the generous help of Mr. and Mrs. Lathan Kiser, purchased a beautiful motor coach designed by Goshen especially for travel. A garage was built to shelter the bus and van in 1992.

Trinity has been recognized as a pace-setting church in its membership growth.



*Members of the Bus Committee with Mr. and Mrs. Kiser.*

Since the Southern Conference began recognizing churches for membership growth in 1985, Trinity was recognized for having the largest gain of membership four out of six years for UCC churches in Western North Carolina. During Dr. Wicker's pastorate the church has experienced a net gain of 288.

Various groups meet at the church for support and fellowship. Among these are Alcoholics Anonymous and Trinity United Singles, a singles ministry which meets at the church each Friday evening.

Dr. Walter Patten was called to serve as





*Thomas and Virginia Rockett, Sexton and Housekeeper.*

Associate Minister in August, 1991. Dr. Patten had served as a United Methodist minister and had taught at Elon and Lenoir-Rhyne Colleges as well as The Divinity School of Duke University.

On November 2, 1991, Rev. Stefanie Graner, a minister-intern from The



*Rev. Stefanie Graner*



*Members of the Consistory, 1992.*

Evangelical Church of the Rhineland in Bonn, Germany, began a six-month internship as a part of an exchange program between the Southern Conference and the Evangelical Church of the Rhineland. She and her husband, Thomas, made numerous friends within the congregation and beyond. It was a very sad day when they left on April 25, 1992.

From the original 17 charter members, Trinity has grown to a church of 815 with an active membership of 570. It has been a church that has a rich history and a history of people who devoted themselves to their church and her Lord. It is a church that has been blessed by God with wonderful and generous people and outstanding ministers. It is a church with a bright and promising future as people commit themselves to service. It is

the hope of the congregation that in another 100 years the congregation of that day will look back to these days with the same kind of appreciation as the church today has for those brave souls whose faith first sowed the seeds of faith to build a church 100 years ago.

### *Music and Choir History*

The first pianist and organist for the church and Sunday School was Carrie Cline, a charter member, and daughter of J.P. and Elizabeth Cline. Carrie married Dr. Franklin L. Herman April 25, 1893, and was thus probably the first to be married in the newly built brick church. She served as pianist and organist for a number of years.

Carrie was succeeded by Annie Shuford



who began serving possibly as early as 1914 and she, along with her brother, William Farel Warlick, and Mildred Washburn, led the music program for more than 30 years. In 1945, Rev. Lonnie Carpenter, with a music allotment of \$35.00 in the budget, went to Catawba College and secured Harry Taylor to come and direct the choir. He was here for only two years due to the distance of travel. Cecil Mae Thornburg Feather and Mildred Drum played the organ during this time. Cecil Mae would later play and direct until May, 1953. Martha Kline was then secured on an interim basis, but played and directed for the next 14 years. After Mrs. Kline resigned, Betty Smith became the organist and would be with the church for 10 years. Choir directors during that period included Lewis Gause, Myrtle Stallings, Gina Poovey, and Virginia Peters. Mrs. Smith resigned in

1979 and was succeeded by Margaret Deal Lane.

Peter Bost became the director succeeding Virginia Peters. Mr. Bost was at Trinity four years. Under his leadership the choir produced a record and the youth of the church and community performed three major musicals. Denise Filip was choir director for 1983 and was followed by Sherry Schlagenhauf who directed for five years. Under Sherry's leadership the children of the church performed a Christmas musical each year. Upon Sherry's resignation, Elga Jones Setzer was secured, but after a year would resign to pursue a musical career in New York. Ron Caldwell would follow Ms. Setzer, and he would be followed by the present director, Keith Smith.

### *The Women's Guild*

The lay work of the women of the church was begun in 1904 with Rebecca Elizabeth Cline as the first president. It was known as The Ladies Aid and Missionary Society. In 1917 The Ladies Aid Society purchased a new piano for the church and in 1920 raised funds for the stained glass windows which would later be transferred to the rock church. It was perhaps this effort which began the Oyster Supper and Bazaar as this has been a tradition of the women of the church for more than seventy-five years. The name was later changed from Ladies Aid Society to Women's Guild. The Guild was most instrumental in raising funds for the building of the new church in 1952. Life Memberships to Church Women of the Southern Conference have been bestowed on a number of outstanding members of the

Guild for their devotion and hard work. The Guild meets monthly throughout the year except for the month of July. Meetings are either in the form of a gathering of all Guild members or one of the four circles: The Morning Circle, The Evening Circle, the Doers' Circle, and the Seekers. The Guild has many projects for ministry including serving a meal to families in times of bereavement, overseeing the parlor and kitchen.

### *The Men's Brotherhood*

The Men's Brotherhood was begun May 26, 1940 with J.W. Wagoner as the first president. Dr. J.M. Darms, Executive Secretary of the Churchmen's Brotherhood was present for the organizational meeting.



*Keith Smith, music director; Margaret Lane, organist.*



*Men's Brotherhood Barbecue - 1984. Pictured are Ralph Bostian and Fred Fox.*



The Brotherhood started going on an Annual Retreat to John's River Valley Camp in the late 1940's and started the Men's Barbecue in 1950. The Brotherhood has sponsored Christmas cheer baskets, softball teams, the scout troop, given to the Salvation Army, and numerous other benevolent causes. Ralph Bostian served as president for more than 20 years.

## Scouting

Scouting in various forms has been a part of Trinity Church since 1936 when a Boy Scout program was begun by William Farel Warlick and Rev. C.C. Wagoner. Trinity has now been serving the Scouting program continuously for 56 years. There have been 66 boys who have obtained Scouting's highest rank of Eagle through Troop 1, Conover, and more recently, Troop 228. Some of the dedicated leaders over the years have been the following:

Lewis Setzer	Tom Winters
Walt Brady	Robert Matheson
Terrell Webster	Dan Timmerman
J. T. Allman	Edward Manning
John Brinkley	Paul Smith
David Seacy	Morris Power
David Holbrook	Jeff Whisenant
Frank Miller	Randy Hawn
Gary Gardner	Wayne Thornburg
Earl Sipe	Bill Roark
Roy Kilpatrick	Gary Shook
Doug Smith	Richard Bowers

The troop could not have been a viable part of Trinity Church for these many years without the unselfish support of the Trinity Brotherhood. In addition to Boy Scouting, the church has been active in Cub Scouting and Girl Scouting.



*Boy Scout Troop 228, Paper Drive, 1943.*

## *The Centennial Committee*

Dr. David Poe, Chairperson

Mr. Yates Havnaer

Mrs. Vera Wagoner

Miss Marjorie Schell

Mrs. Frankie Bowman

Mrs. Mary Crump

Mrs. Bobbie Whisenant

Mr. Jeff Whisenant

Mrs. Pat Hoke

Mrs. Helen Ellis

Mrs. Jewel Gore

Mrs. Virginia Rockett

Mrs. Peggy Smith

Mrs. Lillian Cline

Mr. Franklin D. Herman

Mrs. Henrietta Sherrill

Dr. Les Wicker





# *Celebrating 100 Years of Ministry*

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A HISTORY OF TRINITY UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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1892

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1992

